

# South Carolina's Future: Our Children

Legislative Advocacy Day, February 24, 2009

Legislative Advocacy Day will convene in Columbia on February 24, 2009, at the Columbia Marriott downtown. The day's sessions will concentrate on the condition of our state's children, how those conditions will affect our future, new education funding proposals, and advocacy strategies for the new 118<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

This annual event is co-sponsored by the American Association of University Women of SC, the League of Women Voters SC and the SC School Improvement Council. Members of all three organizations have worked together for the past several years to create an informative day that culminates in a visit by participants to the Statehouse and their local legislators. Come prepared to learn and take information back to those who will make decisions determining the status of our future: our children.

The first session will begin with information from the SC Kids Count database and focus on the economic, social, and physical status of adolescents and young adults, the implications of their circumstances, and the responses that organizations and the state are making. **Dr. Baron Holmes**, director of SC Kids Count, has been asked to clarify the meaning of the data and put it into a context that participants can take home and use in their communities. Dept. of Juvenile Justice Director **Bill Byars** will outline the state's response to children's needs within the juvenile justice system and offer options for more effective action. **Greta Thomas**, SC Children's Trust Fund communications director, will provide ideas about collaborative efforts to address children's needs.

Education is the underpinning for the quality of life for all citizens. Updating the formula for funding education is under consideration during this legislative session. SC Superintendent of Education **Dr. Jim Rex** will share his proposal for a new funding formula in which schools receive monies to provide educational services to all students, replacing the current formula put into place in 1978. Deputy Superintendent for Policy and Legislation **Dr. Sandy Smith** will help us understand how we can advocate with our local legislators in the effort to bring the funding process into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The luncheon program will concentrate on the statewide campaign to amend the South Carolina Constitution to replace the language "minimally adequate" with "high quality" as the constitutional measure for providing education to the state's children. **Justice Ernest Finney**, co-chair of the "Goodbye Minimally Adequate" petition campaign, and **Bud Ferillo**, campaign steering committee coordinator, will discuss the campaign and outline actions local organizations can take to achieve the goal of obtaining 1,000,000 signatures on the petition to support the proposed amendment.

The SC General Assembly begins a new 2-year session in 2009. Its membership will face complex issues about South Carolina's children and how to fund programs proposed for their benefit. Following the luncheon everyone should make the effort to meet with their local legislators – in their offices, in committee meetings, and in the lobby of the Statehouse. Participants are encouraged to make appointments ahead of time in order to present their positions directly to their Representative and/or Senator.

This will be an event that puts you in the role of advocate for improving our state, one legislator at a time. Come and be part of the action and return home equipped to encourage others to follow your leadership as an advocate for South Carolina's children. Please complete the registration form and plan now to attend.